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Soviet arms spending will go on, CIA says

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Washington—The Central Intelligence Agency told Congress yesterday that the Soviet Union had outstripped the United States in weapons spending by 50 percent over the past decade and neither a change in Kremlin leadership nor an economic downturn was likely to bring moderation in arms programs in the 1980s.

In rare testimony on details of Soviet arms production, CIA analysts said the Russians have been outspending the United States in all major categories except tactical air power. Gaps appeared to be widening at the end of the 1970-1979 decade, even though U.S. weapons purchases had begun a steady upturn.

The CIA estimates were laid before a procurement subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee and were expected to provide grist for critics of the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union. Most of the critics are demanding heavy increases in U.S. defense budgets over the next five years.

A leader of those forces, Senator Sam Nunn (D. Ga.), renewed demands in a Senate speech yesterday for an early look at the administration's five-year defense plans. Without a "definite commitment and pronounced leadership" for bigger

military budgets, he said, the nation would be "indulging in a national-security charade."

"If these conditions continue," Mr. Nunn said, "I will not become part of it by voting for SALT II." He thereby seemed to be closing the door another notch—but not completely yet — on administration hopes that he will vote for the strategic arms limitation treaty.

The CIA team, headed by Donald Burton, chief of the military economics division, told the Senate panel that the Soviet Union had spent the equivalent of \$360 billion on weapons in the 1970s, while the United States had spent \$240 billion.

In overall defense spending, including manpower, operations and research and development as well as weapons purchases, the CIA said the Russian figure for the decade was \$1.35 trillion and the American was \$1.05 trillion.

While the disparities were large, William T. Lee, a former CIA man and a longtime analyst of Soviet defense budgets, told the subcommittee that the intelligence agency's estimates on Russia were woefully low. He said the CIA was as wrong now as it was in 1975 and 1976, when it had to double its estimates of what the Soviet Union had spent on defense in 1970.

The CIA analysis, Mr. Lee contended, took no account of large but unknown quantities of ammunition and other items that cannot be counted, nor did it factor in the increased costs of more complex weapons now being produced.

Claiming that total Soviet military expenditures—but not specific details—can be derived reasonably well from published Soviet economic data, Mr. Lee estimated that Moscow would invest 18 percent of gross national product in defense in 1980, compared with a CIA estimate of 11 or 12 percent.

Whatever their differences on dollar and ruble costs of Soviet arms, the witnesses generally agreed that neither a worsening economic situation nor leadership changes in the post-Brezhnev era would slacken Moscow's military programs. Basic policies will persist, they argued.

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CIA 8 Senate Armed
Services Committee
Subcommittee

CIA 1.04 Burton, Donald

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Estimate

USSR Arms Expenditure

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